

5-1-1824

# Medical Deception and Imposition Upon the Public : Discovered, Detected and Exposed, Designed for the Use of all to Whom it May Come or Concern

Joseph Fernald

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## Recommended Citation

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# **MEDICAL DECEPTION**

AND

## **IMPOSITION UPON THE PUBLIC,**

**DISCOVERED, DETECTED AND EXPOSED.**

**DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF ALL TO WHOM IT MAY COME OR CONCERN,**

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**By JOSEPH FERNALD,**

**OF PORTLAND, (Me.)**

**MARCH, A. D. 1824.**

May impious quacks and false pretenders all,  
From all their brags and boastings fall,  
And never more upon deceptive imposition call,  
To get their living from the public all.

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**A. SHIRLEY, PRINTER.**

**1824.**

*DISTRICT OF MAINE, ss.*

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\* L.S. \*  
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BE IT REMEMBERED, That on this thirty first day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-four, and the forty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Mr. JOSEPH FERNALD, of the District of Maine, has deposited in this Office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following, viz:

"Medical deception and imposition upon the Public, discovered, detected, and exposed. Designed for the use of all to whom it may come or concern. By Joseph Fernald, of Portland, (Me.) March, A. D, 1824. May impious quack and false pretenders all, From all their brags and boastings fall, And never more upon deceptive imposition call, To get their living from the public all. A. Shirley, Printer."

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also, to an act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an act, entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JOHN MUSSEY, *Clerk of the District Court of Maine.*

A true copy as of record,

Attest, JOHN MUSSEY, *Clerk D. C. Maine.*

## DECEPTION EXPOSED.

WHEREAS I the subscriber, having recently heard of a certain medical man by the name of Druerd, alias Werd, the latter of which, if spelt backward, would cause a greater alteration than Hannah would if contrasted. But as I do not know his positive name, I shall designate him by the name of Mr. D. or Dr. D. as "D" is the initial letter of his first name; and as "D" is the first letter of another character, which (I presume) is as applicable to him as R is to rogue. It is said that he is a travelling inhabitant of the United States, and makes great pretensions to medical skill.

The first intelligence I had of him was that he was itinerating in N. Hampshire and by some called a *great Doctor!* by others he is called a *quack* or imposter. Having been deceived and imposed upon by several Doctors and *Doctresses* of the same description with Dr. D. (although I have been benefitted by some of them, yet their impositions has led me to enquire how his "miraculous cures" are effected; and supposing their treatment resembled that pursued by physicians who have cured some of the most dismal maladies, *or like some of those by which I have been imposed upon, and therefore, (if not the latter,) he ought, if possible to be detected and exposed.*

Some have supposed that he performs his cures by a supernatural power, (and if so) why so much fuss about his medicines? I am informed by a certain Senator from the most westerly part of this State, a member of our last legislature, that one of the wonders which he has performed, is that of boiling ice at the bottom of a vessel of water without dissolving it. This has been considered by some as miraculous as that of the burning bush. The next information I had of him was that he was in the county of York, surrounded by the sick, lame and crazy. One afflicted with the latter

malady he undertook to cure with a nostrum which he called "A." and which, upon examination, was found to be the same kind of stuff which he gave those afflicted with other disorders. How his medicine "A." operated upon said patient, I have not heard. But since that time I have seen a woman in this vicinity who has been to N. H. to try to get cured by said Doctor of the Salt Rheum; and she says that the medicine which he gave her operates just as he told her it would. She says that she has no reason to think that it will ever cure her. Viz. Dry up the Scrofula and cause it to scale off, &c. I then asked her what he called it? She said "A." "Thinks I to myself," if the same medicine will cure the delirium, rheumatism, dropsy and asthma (as has been represented,) will also eradicate the salt rheum, (or scrofulous canker as he called it,) surely it must be a wonderful thing indeed.

I then asked her to let me see said medicine. It had no smell that I could perceive, but it tasted and operated in my mouth more like allum than any other thing with which I am acquainted, and led me to think of the appearance which allum would have at the bottom of water, resembling ice. I then came home and tried an experiment, which proved to be equal to Dr. D's *Allum-water* or medicine "A." I then carried it to the scrofulous woman, which operated on her exactly like that she had of Dr. D. which convinced me at once that his wonderful *cure all* medicine was nothing more nor less than "allum-water," which led me to see the propriety (or rather the probability that alum would contract, draw up and scale off a scrofulous humour (as he described it to her.) These experiments can be tried by any one who may please, except he should alter "A." into B. after hearing this discovery before any of it could be obtained; and if I am mistaken I shall be willing to acknowledge it.

If his medicine will do all for which he has applied it, why may he not with the whole alphabet cure all kind

of diseases and limping infirmities (as is represented of him.) Even if they are all one and the same medicine, only marked with different Characters ? “ A word to the wise is enough.” I am not fond of quack doctors, quack lawyers, nor of any other *quacking characters*; but how can I or any body else disapprove of Dr. D’s medical administration, if he can do such mighty wonders with simple “ Allum-water” only ! Created from ice (as has been represented) at the bottom of boiling water and distinguished from inferior medicine by the first letter of the alphabet, meaning, as I suppose No. 1, or first quality, and superior to all others. Therefore, those who are troubled with any disease and cannot otherways get cured, may apply Dr. D’s medicine “ A.” as I have not yet found out B nor any other of the Dominicals.

If there are any *abominable* old maids who are troubled with any kind of infirmities, which may prevent them from going to market, and are impatiently and impetuously desirous to get help, and can by no other means obtain it, then let them try a little of Dr. D’s No. 1.

I understand that Mr. D. refuses to bear the titles of doctor, surgeon or physician, but assumes the appellation of a naturalist, and still he takes the bible to guide him in his practice. If nature has taught him the excellent use of “ Allum-water,” and supposes himself justified by sacred writ, is it not a wonder of wonders, and can it not be considered one of the seven wonders of the world, that it has never before been discovered that Allum would cure the most inveterate humour throughout the whole system, of twenty odd years standing, and compose the distracted, heal the sick and relieve the distressed situation of the asthmatical and dropsical complaints. I hope that Dr. D. will not only attend to the bible for medical instruction, but also in all other things be governed by its injunctions, and try to practice the golden rule :—Do unto others as he would

that others should do unto him," and may I and every other person do likewise.

And so I remain a well wisher to all the human family. For food and raiment as well as for physic, (whether allum or any thing else, every thing is good in its place,) and for all other comforts of this life and of that which is to come. Not forgetting Dr. D. believing from good authority, that he has did some acts of benevolence and deeds of charity, hoping that his feet are not entirely diverted from the paths of rectitude, but if he has in any degree swerved therefrom, may he be so much convicted thereof, as to repent of the evil, acknowledge, and renounce the same, and be constrained to say "that his last days are better than his first"—"and may he live the life of the righteous that his last end may be like theirs," together with all the human family.

JOSEPH FERNALD, A. M.

Not Master of Arts, but ignorant of the learned sciences. I was not brought up a doctor. Neither have I the learning of a minister, lawyer, surgeon, physician, philosopher or chemist.\*

But I was brought up an illiterate man, subjected to hard labor, and ever have been, and I well know how hard-labouring people get their living; therefore I wish them to know better than to give their hard earnings away to medical imposters or to pretended natural or supernaturalists, or to half taught sons of Esculapius.

Although it is difficult to discover and avoid the latter, by whom (no doubt) many suffer, and I have been taken in by some of the former, both male and female, Dr. Rekoore not excepted, whether his name be spelt

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\*Although a certain man who has been deceived by Dr. D. says, that he defies all the chemists in the world to find out what said medicine is made of! Is it not wonderful what lengths deception, imposition, tradition and superstition can be carried to?

backward or not, and as to the females I forbear to name them, if they never more deceive or extort.

I have seen so much medical as well as other deception, and suffered so much by it, that I have reason to abhor, detest, detect and expose every thing of the kind that lies in my power, and therefore I know how to pity all those who are caught in the trap of deception, or suffer the effects of imposition or extortion of any kind, especially those of medical as well as those of religious and political pretensions.

Would it not be as criminal in me to hide any thing of this kind as to secrete an enemy's spy in time of war? If I should be way-laid by a high-way robber, or meet with any one exposed to danger of this kind, exhibiting wounds or some signal tokens thereof, and should not make disclosure thereof, how could I expect to lie down with a clear conscience? How much better is Dr. D. than a robber, even though he does not take by the force of arms, but in a delusive manner?

Almost every day brings news of the doctor's pretended greatness. I understand he says he has assisted in dissecting and anatomizing 200 human bodies, and if so, he must of course be an excellent surgeon, or a very dull scholar. If not a great physician of which his medical system will be public proof, his bottle of "A." is like paddie's razors, "made to sell." I am told that he is so liberal as not to take any thing from some people for doctoring them, and takes only from 2 to 5 dollars for one whole junk bottle full of his highest proof "Allum-water," which perhaps costs him 6 cents. Beware, my friends, of too much flattery and liberality in strangers, unless you can discover something better than quackery about them; otherwise they may eat like a canker, bite like a serpent, or sting like an adder in the end.

Be cautious of them, and jealous of their medicines; fear them as you would the Bohon Upas, or the poison tree of Java!! Although they may not give any dead-



ly poison, because that would betray them at once, they may give something which would do neither good nor hurt which will cost them but little or nothing, in order to get a living thereby, especially a bottle of "A."

It will not be likely to do much harm; unless, too much of it should be taken inwardly and thereby draw up the elementary canal so close that several portions of suitable physic would be necessary to stretch nature to her original state; but what other operation it would have I leave with those who have had more experience than I have.

Since I finished my remarks on Dr. D's medicine "A." or No. 1, I have heard of three others: one of which he calls the steaming steams, the second the steam of steams, & the third the *Steam of all Steams!!*\* The explanation of which I shall dispense with until I can fully ascertain the way and manner whereby he creates and obtains those steams and how he administers them, of which I have the promise as soon as convenience will permit.

I should be glad to see Dr. D. and to have some *personal acquaintance* with him and to get some further information of his medical system, &c. I do not mean to injure him, but try to do him all the good that I can; and in fact, I have no doubt but this notice will prove beneficial to him, and therefore, I hope that he will not be offended at my discovery. If he is not, I expect to know it by his *silence*; but if otherways I expect the reverse.

I shall leave him at present, hoping that this communication will terminate for his good and for the good of the public, and be the means of inducing him to stricter attention to his medical business, and make greater discoveries than ever he has, and never more attempt to deceive nor impose upon any person, by ad-

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\*Let Dr. Thompson beat this if he can.

ministering nostrums, especially such as will do no good.—I made this discovery the first of the present month, and it bore with such weight on my mind for several days, that I could not sleep at night as usual, till at length I took my pen and began to scribble a communication for some of the news-printers ; but apprehending that they might not consider it of that consequence which I do, and refuse to publish it without a compensation, or if published gratis, it would be talked about and then thrown by and forgotten—whereas a pamphlet would very likely be *kept by careful people* who are not friends to swindling or of paying money, without any benefit to themselves whenever a flood of “Allum-water,” or any thing of the kind may be presented to them, and thereby they can avoid it until they hear the certainty of its fame. Therefore I concluded to publish it in the form of a pamphlet, though not very capable of doing it in any way ; but as duty calls I dare not resist. It cannot be expected of me to write very explicit nor intelligibly ; and if I am found to have gone all round the house to get into the door, or to have put the “cart before the horse,” it will be no more than I expect, having no more time to devote to this subject than what I need for rest, and at the same time, my mind embarrassed with business, and some other things.

Therefore the public will have it as I write it—except the printer should correct some of the spelling. Learning and eloquence I have not, but “such as I have give I unto thee.” JOSEPH FERNALD.

Some people may wonder why a man of my illiterate and unpopular situation of life, should attempt to write a book, or seek after medical knowledge. In reply, I will just state the occasion which led to it, as hinted at in the beginning of this work.

On the approach of the spring of 1822, I was taken ill with what I then thought to be nothing more than

the common Jaundice, which I had been frequently troubled with at that season of the year ; and I began to doctor accordingly—but instead of growing better I grew worse, until at length I applied to the physicians and got all the information from them, which they could impart. They puked, bled and physicked me. And I took European and American, 4 patent and Indian medicines ; but all to no effect, except a momentary relief from some of them.

Finally, I gave up all hopes of recovery—and apprehended that I should drag out a miserable existence ; but while ruminating upon my miserable situation I was advised by one of my town's-men to apply to a certain doctor, who, he said, "had cured him of similar complaints," and although I was told that he would kill me, yet I thought I might as well die by medicine as by disease ; therefore, I applied to him and by taking his medicines for several weeks I was as well as I had been at any time for 40 years previous. I have since known several others cured, and I have heard of many more who have recovered their health by the same means when all others failed, which has created an anxiety in me, to know, if there are any other doctors who know any thing of said medicines, and by enquiring and reading medical books, I cannot find any who understand it, nor any resemblance of it in any other systems. I have found one *excellent* doctor by the name of Steward, who is called a *quack*, and whose medical system is similar to the one in my pursuit, excepting physic, which is essentially different.

I have searched into Dr. D's. system, and find him to be ignorant of that which I pursue, notwithstanding if I had heard of his *greatness* at the time of my sickness, I should, no doubt, have travelled a great distance and ranged the mountains of Vermont to have found him—and thus it is when sickly people cannot get relieved, and hear of great doctors, whether quacks or

not, and, of the great cures which they effect, we are generally so anxious to get relief, that we will catch at a straw like a drowning man, because health and life is sweet, and what is there living which will not struggle to obtain it.—I am sensible that “it is not unto him who willeth nor him who runneth, &c.” but if we do nothing then we shall not answer the purpose for which we were made. Is it not considered by all *rational* people that we should be in the use of means? And are not we commanded to preserve our own and the lives of others. Saying nothing by what meant we should do it, whether by illiterate, ill bred quacks, or by *polite* and learned doctors.

Be careful, my sympathizing friends, lest your anxiety for health or life, should carry you where it will not get satisfied, excepting by the *puckering operation* of allum-water or by some similar nostrum.

I thought in the time of my dismal feeling that if it would please the great Physician of all physicians, to send some *supernatural hand*\* to relieve me, that I should be thankful, which causes me to pity those who are in a similar situation.

Is it not better to get cured of inward and unknown maladies than to die thereby and then to be opened to find the cause? as has been the case with some in like complaints of others, who have been cured by said medicines.

I profess to be a humane, *rational* man, but whether I am so or not, those with whom I am acquainted can decide. If we know of any thing whereby the dreary, distressed or miserably infirm, can probably get relief, and we do not inform them of it, should we not be considered like cruel monsters in human shape?

If we have no regard for any but our best friends and favorite neighbors and acquaintance, should we

\*This was before Dr. D. had his mission.

not then be miserable subjects for society and useless members to mankind in general?

Who was friend and neighbor to him who "went from Jerusalem down to Jerico and fell among thieves"? or what would have become of me had not I been told the way by which I recovered my health, and why should we not all do likewise when in our power, although we may be ridiculed therefor? We do not read that the good Samaritan was persecuted when he gave charge to the host.

Notwithstanding I had no doubt but my favorite doctors did the best for me in their power, yet I often tho't that I would ask advice of some of those doctors who occasionally come into town; but when I considered that their practice was the same, therefore they might laugh at me, they knowing that we have some of the best of them here who are often called into the country on extraordinary cases. So I held my peace—but if I should now hold it—inanimate creation would cry out against me.

Much is said against new things as they are generally considered, like a new broom which sweeps clean at first and then all is over, which is sometimes the case, but if it was always so, we should have remained in as great a state of ignorance as the Antedeluvians were, before the flood.

Rollin informs us that the Babylonians exposed their sick in the sight of strangers in order to ascertain if they had ever been affected with the like disease, and by what means they had recovered, &c. If no better medical aid had been known than that of Babylon, then of course we should not have had any other; but are there not hundreds of medical discoveries which have been since that day and are now laid aside? and why not as probable for medical or any other useful discoveries to be made at the present as at ancient day?

As soon as any thing happens a little out of the com-

mon course of things, the cry is, a new broom sweeps clean, or the world is turning upside down, and filling up with quackery or some new doctrine of heresy and delusion.

Thus has it been in all ages relative to the rise and progress of religious and political as well as medical matters, and so it remains to the present day, and no doubt but it ever will so long as the heart of man is set in him to do evil, and he hearkens to its dictates instead of attending to the voice of wisdom which teacheth as never man taught. However, is it any matter whether the broom is old or new, if we can only keep our house clean, and our tongues from speaking guile, and dispising every thing which is not *popular* or does not suit our ideas or agree with our opinions, however beneficial they might be to mankind.

Learned and *popular* men have written on different subjects without any opposition, but if an illiterate laboring person attempts any thing of the kind, or any thing which does not nominally belong to him, as is the case with me respecting this pamphlet, the cry (generally) is *ignorance* and *folly*, which may be the case with some in the present instance, and I am willing that it should be as for myself; therefore if any one has any thing unfavorable to say, let him say on, but say it to me and not to my friends lest they should be guilty of backbiting, but may they strive to be peace makers and then they will have the blessing.

I am a tough old man, of a common size and vigour, and able to bear whatever may be said hereon; and if I cannot stand my ground, I can then get an *aïd*, or an *armour bearer*. I do not want any of my friends to bear my burdens nor answer for me on this publication nor any thing else, therefore let *rational people* act accordingly; but the irrational will act and show themselves whether they have advice or not. Let none be more cautious of being *known*, than they are of *speaking*.

ing. This is a free country, (and I am glad of it,) therefore, any one has a right to show their teeth or open their mouth from ear to ear at any thing they please, and others have a right to notice it or not at their pleasure. Moreover I request my friends not to tell me that I shall be laughed at, because it is what I expect, and any one has a right so to do, therefore, I am as willing that they should improve their right in laughing, as I am glad to exercise the right of publishing it. I shall never quarrel with any body on this subject, therefore I conclude—and remain, whatever I may herein appear to be, with as little hypocrisy as the case will admit of.

#### JOSEPH FERNALD.

Some may *querre* why I should get any exclusive right for this publication, as it appears to be intended wholly for *public utility*. In reply I would observe that having been to the whole expence, if I should publish it for any body else, the country might be supplied before I could sell enough to pay for my publication—and as I am but a poor man, it would come heavier upon me than I should be willing to bear even if I were able.

It is my intention if providence permits, as soon as convenient, to publish the remainder of Dr. D's works, together with a general description of the medical systems of all the Doctors with whom I am acquainted, whose characters resemble Dr. D's—comparing them and their success in practice with doctors in general, and also the manner by which I was doctored, and some of the botanical medicines used in the diseases to which they apply, in order that all the people and their different classes of doctors might understand the subject, and reject all which may be found therein, not *genuine* by comparing them with other medicines, and then they can practice whenever they may find it necessary, rational, and not dangerous; which has been the case

with some doctors and people because they do not understand them, and how can they tell whether they are dangerous or not, except by their bad effects? This system no doubt will prove very beneficial to the learned young men who are studying physic—which will make them more celebrated than any who have gone before them. I propose adding some explanatory notes, and other medical observations on practical doctoring, both ancient and modern, together with some pertinent remarks on subjects in general, intended for the good of the rising generation, if they do not bring too much of the old superstitious block along with them.

I being one of the several who were last doctored by the discoverer of said medicine, (before his death,) and he having no family, we were not only permitted by our request but desired by him to commit to writing the whole of his medical system, together with all that he had written thereon. Some of whom are now practicing, having had some previous information and instruction of him and practised the same while he was living, he wishing at the same time that every doctor in the world knew some certain medical particulars with which he was acquainted, which was not known in their system nor practice; but fearing that it was too late for him to give public information thereof, he would try to do all towards it that he could.

The better to satisfy the public mind on this subject, I will just state the partial occasion of his medicines having that effect which no other has, viz. by compounding foreign and domestic medicines together; and this compound appears so much more than the usual doses and the time it takes to have their full effects, that the people fear them, even some who take them; until they get convinced that they cannot injure them; but be careful how you try experiments hereon as has already been done, by recipes left at apothecary's shops specifying certain dregs supposed to be inward



applications, which would be liable to do more hurt than good in unskillful hands. If some of our learned and celebrated doctors understood said medicine, they would no doubt do much good, because the sick would not fear to take them as they now do, because those who administer them are not scientifically bred.

If any body wish for further information, they can have it by leaving a letter for the subscriber at Patten's or Barker's Hotels, opposite each other, Main-street, Portland, or at the post office, (*post paid.*) That is to say, such information as I am capable of giving, or as may be proper and equitable for me to communicate relative to the administrators of said system, although they know nothing of this publication nor never will until they may see it in public print—but let none make application to be doctored thereby unless they persevere therein as the nature of the system requires, in order to get a radical cure, otherwise they better let it alone—because they may be *assured* that by taking it upon trial and then quitting it, as many has done, it *never will* cure them—therefore whoever may think to get well from sickness by taking said medicines and not feel the operation thereof, better not trouble themselves with it.

If doubts exist in the minds of any, respecting what I have asserted about the *allum-water*, or Dr. D's No. 1, let a chemist decide the matter by actual experiment—and if he corroborates my statement, as he most assuredly will, then let his advocates acknowledge it, and forever after hold their peace.—As it regards the mode of practice pointed out in my Prospectus, I would observe that it has proved effectual as far as I have seen it administered ; but if any one has reason to doubt it, let him exhibit his proof to the public—and I will acknowledge my self unworthy of the title of M. D. or A. M. and relinquish the further pursuit of the subject, until my new work is prepared for the press—when the public may again expect to hear from their friend

JOSEPH FERNALD,